

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A medical probe, comprising:  
5 an elongate member having a proximal end and a distal end;  
an ablative element mounted to the distal end of the elongate member; and  
a protective element mounted to the distal end of the elongate member, wherein  
the protective element at least partially covers the ablative element.
- 10 2. The medical probe of claim 1, wherein the protective element comprises a cage  
assembly.
3. The medical probe of claim 2, wherein the cage assembly includes a proximal  
end, a distal end, and a plurality of struts secured between the proximal end and the distal  
15 end.
4. The medical probe of claim 2, wherein the cage assembly comprises a ring  
element that coaxially surrounds and is slidable relative to the elongate member.
- 20 5. The medical probe of claim 4, wherein one of the proximal end and the distal end  
of the cage assembly comprises the ring element, and the other of the proximal end and  
distal end is fixedly secured to the elongate member.

6. The medical probe of claim 5, wherein the proximal end of the cage assembly comprises the ring element, and the distal end of the cage assembly is fixedly secured to the elongate member.

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7. The medical probe of claim 5, wherein the distal end of the cage assembly comprises the ring element, and the proximal end of the cage assembly is fixedly secured to the elongate member.

10 8. The medical probe of claim 1, further comprising a sleeve having a lumen in which the elongate member is slidably disposed.

9. The medical probe of claim 1, wherein the protective element has an expanded configuration when outside the lumen of the sleeve, and a collapsed configuration when  
15 inside the lumen of the sleeve.

10. The medical probe of claim 1, wherein the protective element is made from an electrically non-conductive material.

20 11. The medical probe of claim 1, wherein the protective element comprises a braided or woven structure.

12. The medical probe of claim 1, further comprising a handle assembly secured to a proximal end of the elongate member.

13. The medical probe of claim 12, wherein the handle assembly comprises a steering  
5 mechanism.

14. The medical probe of claim 1, wherein the elongate member is a catheter member.

15. The medical probe of claim 1, wherein the ablative element is an electrode.

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16. The medical probe of claim 1, further comprising:  
an additional ablative element mounted to the distal end of the elongate member;  
and

an additional protective element mounted to the distal end of the elongate  
15 member, the additional protective element at least partially covering the additional  
ablative element.

17. The medical probe of claim 1, further comprising:  
an additional ablative element mounted to the distal end of the elongate member,  
20 wherein the protective element at least partially covers the ablative element and the  
additional ablative element.

18. The medical probe of claim 1, wherein the protective element completely covers the ablative element.

19. A method of treating tissue in a body, comprising:

5 inserting an ablative element in the body;

placing the ablative element adjacent the tissue; and

maintaining a distance between the ablative element and the tissue using a protective catheter element that circumscribes at least a portion of the ablative element.

10 20. The method of claim 19, wherein the ablative element is carried at a distal end of an elongate member, and the inserting comprises inserting the distal end of the elongate member into the body.

21. The method of claim 19, wherein the protective catheter element comprises a cage  
15 assembly.